

Administrator Gina McCarthy
Trout Unlimited Annual Meeting
Madison, WI
September 27, 2013

Acknowledgements:

- Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited (Introducing you)

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- Good afternoon. Thank you, Chris, for that introduction.
- I'd also like to give a shout out to Steve Moyer. I saw Steve just last week at the White House along with a bunch of your fellow sportsmen colleagues. We had a great conversation --- along with Secretaries Vilsack and Jewel, and other members of the President's team.
- But I'm glad to have a chance to come to your neck of the woods.
- Most of you here today are TU Volunteer Leaders from around the country. Am I right?
- Let me tell you what's amazing.

- What's amazing is that much of TU's work at the local level is done by Volunteer Leaders --- by all of you. People like you who just love to fish. People who are innately driven to act to protect and restore their local waters.
- I know what motivates you --- because it motivates me too.
- It's a deep rooted appreciation for the ~~bountiful~~ natural resources we're blessed with here in the United States.
 - An appreciation ~~underscored by the longstanding, abiding~~ of the relationship hunters and anglers share with the land and water around us.
 - An appreciation that is part of our character as a nation --- defining our American heritage.
- But above all --- what we value most is the ability to pass on to our children an earth with the same rich ecosystems, sprawling landscapes, and pristine waters that we inherited.
- These same values are also what drive our mission at EPA. A mission to protect public health and the environment --- so we can leave a safe, healthy, and vibrant planet to future generations.
- And these same values are what drove President Teddy Roosevelt --- with the help of your forefathers --- to pioneer the "North American Model of Conservation." A model that is still the envy of the world.

- And now --- the Park Service, the Forest Service, and National Wildlife Refuges are part of his renowned conservation legacy.
- He had the courage to take on the conservation challenges of his time --
- the question is, do we have that courage today?
- **Ensuring clean water, healthy air, livable land, and a stable climate for our children demands we act ~~courageously~~ to meet the conservation challenges of the 21st century.**

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- Water has always been --- and remains --- a top priority for the EPA.
- And a few weeks ago --- I reaffirmed our commitment by spelling it out as a guiding agency principle for months and years to come.
- We must update our aging water infrastructure so everyone has access to safe drinking water. And we must be vigilant in protecting America's most iconic water bodies and ecosystems --- ~~ecosystems just miles away like the Great Lakes, just miles away from here.~~
- Back in 2009, President Obama mobilized federal agencies across the government to launch the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. He asked EPA to take a leading role. And from 2010 to 2012 alone --- we've been involved with more than 85 projects throughout the Great Lakes Basin

that target trout through habitat restoration, stocking, research, and more.

- In fact --- right here in northern Wisconsin --- is the Graveyard Creek Brook Trout Habitat Restoration Project. This project aims to remove beaver dams, improve stream flow, and expand trout spawning areas.
- And through the America's Great Outdoors initiative, we continue to focus on water by working with USDA, DOI, and others to ensure our rivers and lakes are clean enough to be worthy centerpieces in cities and towns around the country.

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- And we've very recently taken some important steps forward on water conservation that I'm sure you're aware of.
- EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers just sent a draft rule for review to the Office of Management and Budget --- a rule that would clarify the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act .
- I know you've all been pretty interested in this rule --- and for good reason. The proposed rule will provide consistency, certainty, and predictability nationwide by making clear where the Clean Water Act applies.

- Some waterbodies currently in question absorb floods, filter pollutants, and contribute to the drinking water supply of over 115 million Americans.
- And --- of course --- they also support healthy hunting and fishing activity and our economy.
- Anglers alone generated nearly \$115 billion dollars in total economic activity in 2011, invigorating rural communities and supporting more than one million jobs across the country. And that isn't counting tourism and the health benefits of keeping these ecosystems intact.
- This is not just a cultural issue, it's not just an American values issue --- it's also very much an economic issue throughout the nation.
- That's exactly what makes the concerns surrounding Bristol Bay so important --- and why everyone here rightfully cares about what happens in that part of Alaska.

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- A few weeks ago, I went up to Bristol Bay on a fact finding mission. I wanted to see it for myself. I wanted to hear from Alaskans, local tribes, businesses, NGOs, and more.
- Soon --- EPA will be releasing the final Watershed assessment that you all have been so involved in.

- I can't reveal much more. But what I will say is this: the assessment is grounded in good science and an open process. Ultimately, that is what makes for good policy.
- The watershed assessment will give us a solid scientific foundation upon which we can build.
- Between public meetings, hearings, peer reviews, and comments for those peer reviewers --- there's been an incredible amount of helpful communication --- which ultimately strengthens the assessment.

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- I want to make the next point clear.
- If we are serious about protecting our water resources-- and protecting our long valued American traditions --- we **must** be serious about taking on climate change.
- Because they depend on an abundance of clear, cold water, trout are especially vulnerable to a changing climate. Rising temperatures will warm coldwater habitats --- hurting trout already suffering from habitat loss.
- To quote your very own Steve Moyer --- "it doesn't take a big jump in the temperature of a stream to wipe out a population of brookies"

- Steve's quote is found in a collaborative report that TU helped produce - -- a report that lays out what's at stake with some pretty startling predictions:
 - Nationally, up to 42 percent of current trout and salmon habitat will be lost before the end of the century.
 - In regions most affected by increasing temperatures, trout and salmon populations will be cut in half.
 - With the advent of sea-level rise --- salt water will invade rivers and freshwater lakes --- destroying habitat for certain types of warm-water fish.
 - And the list goes on and on...
- But I know in this room --- I'm preaching to the choir.
- You all get it because you are in the thick of it. You're in the trenches. You feel the milder winters, drier summers, fewer snowfalls, and fiercer storms. When you cast your rod --- you notice fish are less plentiful --- and conditions are less favorable.
- That's why in March of this year --- you joined other sportsmen's groups representing millions of hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreation businesses --- to send a letter to President Obama --- calling on him to follow through on climate action.

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- **And since then --- he's heeded that call.**
- In late June --- President Obama unveiled a comprehensive Climate Action Plan.
- As directed by the Plan --- EPA is engaged on multiple fronts. First, we're addressing the impacts of climate change today by protecting habitats. And second, by taking responsible steps to reduce the harmful carbon pollution that is fuelling climate change.

On the preparedness front --- for example --- EPA's Climate Ready Estuaries program provides crucial technical assistance to prepare vulnerable coastal areas. The program offers tools to monitor changes, and information to help managers protect estuaries and communities along the coast.

- When it comes to reducing carbon pollution --- EPA has a key role to play. As part of the President's Climate Action Plan, he directed the EPA to complete carbon pollution standards for new and existing power plants.
- The plain truth is --- we've already set limits to reduce dangerous pollutants like mercury, arsenic, lead, and selenium. These pollutants are toxic heavy metals that don't break down easily and can

contaminate sediment in waterways --- poisoning and sometimes killing fish and wildlife.

- But we let power plants get a free ride when it comes to carbon pollution.
- So just last week --- backed by sound science --- we proposed standards to limit carbon pollution from new power plants.
- Using good science to confront environmental and conservation challenges --- that is something hunters and anglers are intimately familiar with.
- Pioneered by sportsmen, the North American Wildlife Conservation Model was founded on two basic principles:
- First --- our fish and wildlife belong to all Americans
- And second --- they need to be managed so their populations can be sustained for future generations.
- The reasoning behind addressing climate change is the same --- we are using good science to enact commonsense pollution limits that protect the health of our planet and our families for generations to come.
- The standards are flexible and achievable. They set different limits for different types of natural gas and coal plants --- and they're based on efficient, clean, home grown technologies.

- We're also committed to proposing standards for existing power plants. However --- that process has a longer timeline --- and we plan to release those proposed standards by June of 2014.
- In the mean time --- we've begun speaking to industry, businesses, and NGOs like yours --- to make sure folks who want to weigh in have the opportunity to do so. We want to hear from you. And we look forward to giving each comment we receive thorough consideration.

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- Our conservation challenges have evolved since the time of Teddy Roosevelt. And we must evolve too.
- When speaking on climate change --- President Obama posed a simple question: Do we have the courage to act before it's too late? How we answer will have a profound impact on the world we leave behind for future generations.
- What gives me hope is my immense faith in the folks in this room --- because your reputation for courage precedes you. You're legacy as the original conservationists --- as exemplary stewards of our earth --- speaks for itself.
- Make no mistake about it --- this is our "Teddy Roosevelt" moment.

- ~~My only ask of you is this: Continue to make yourselves heard. You are among the most credible voices on these topics. It's more important — now than ever — that your stories be told.~~
- Our drive to protect our precious water, ensure the stability of our climate, and preserve our most sacred American traditions is borne from single, prevailing American value.
- That above all --- we are obligated to provide our children with clean air to breath, clean water to drink, healthy land to call their home.
- And by meeting that obligation --- we take comfort in knowing that they too will enjoy the great American outdoors we've long since ~~cherished~~enjoyed.
- Thank you. I'm happy to take a few questions.